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NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE LECTURE, George F. Kennan
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UNITED STATES POLICY WITH RESPECT TO JAPAN AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE

Anyone who has spent decades in a foreign country finds it very hard to come back and make statements about it. Anyone who has spent three weeks in a foreign country naturally has everything all doped out and is in a position to state with unalloyed confidence what it is all about. I could, therefore, of course restrict myself to the exact title which this lecture has been given and could set out to tell you all about the country of Japan. However, I am going to resist this temptation and confine myself to a more modest subject, namely certain of the major problems which we face today in the field of policy with respect to Japan as they appeared to me at the time of my recent visit there.

Let me just make sure that before we begin to examine these problems we have clearly before our eyes the situation as it exists today. At the end of a war which we fought--as the leading member of a coalition of Allies, we found ourselves in occupation of the entire territory of the enemy, who had surrendered unconditionally. We had stated, in a solemn declaration, that the purpose of the occupation was to enforce the terms of surrender and that when these terms had been complied with the occupation would be withdrawn.

The terms of surrender called upon the Japanese Government to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration and to do whatever the Supreme Commander might instruct them to do for that purpose.

The Potsdam Declaration, in turn, called upon the Japanese Government to remove all obstacles to the

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revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people". It stipulated that freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights, should be established and that Japan's war-making power should be destroyed.

It said nothing about a treaty of peace; nor did the terms of surrender.

By the beginning of this year, these provisions of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration had been in large measure carried out. In theory, therefore, we would have been able to contemplate an early abandonment of the occupation. It was generally assumed, however, that this could not be done until there had been negotiated a treaty of peace which would define the territorial limits of the Japanese State and its obligations for the future.

Accordingly, a year ago we took the lead in sounding out the other Allies on the question of a treaty of peace, and proposed an eleven-power conference, in which the two-thirds voting rule would apply, for the purpose of drafting a treaty. You know the results of that invitation. All of the other countries indicated their agreement, in one way or another, except the Soviet Union and China. The Soviet Government insisted that the question of a treaty of peace should first be discussed in the Council of Foreign Ministers, where Russia would have a veto. In the light of the Russian position, the Chinese Government also came out against the two-thirds voting procedure. It did not, however, swing over

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entirely to the Russian position; for this would have put it at odds with its other Asiatic neighbors who would, under the Russian proposal, have been left out of the main discussions. Instead, it proposed that the conference be run on the principle which governs the deliberations of the Far Eastern Commission: namely, including all eleven countries, but with China, the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom having the veto power. The Chinese had two reasons for taking this position. First, they recollected with some bitterness and anxiety the Yalta Conference, where their fate had been discussed in their absence; and they wished to make sure that China would have her say from now on. Secondly, they recalled the clause in the Chinese-Russian Pact of 1945 to the effect that neither party would make a separate peace settlement with Japan to which the other did not agree. They were afraid that if they combined with the others to insist on a two-thirds voting procedure, Russia would refuse entirely to participate, and this would make it possible for the Russians to claim that they had violated the Sino-Soviet Treaty and to bring into question the territorial settlements which that treaty had sanctioned.

As the result of these divergent positions--that of Russia, that of China, and that of the other nine powers--a deadlock developed last fall, in which no further progress could be made on the peace treaty question.

The problem which has confronted us, therefore, during the past winter, has been: where do we go from here? Should we make [illegible] a peace

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this question, we must face not only the political but also the economic and military angles. Let us take these in reverse order and begin first with the military questions, which will be of most interest to you.

I do not need to describe to you the military situation in which Japan finds herself at the present time. She is demilitarized, both by the terms of the surrender and by the terms of the new Japanese constitution, approved with our blessing. In that constitution Japan renounced war as an instrument of policy and by implication declared herself a permanently demilitarized nation. The actual physical demilitarization has been carried out with great thoroughness. Even the police lack modern police weapons, and have only skeleton equipment of side arms.

Meanwhile, by virtue of the new Soviet borders, Russian power has been moved to within a few miles of Japan, both at the Kurile Islands and in the island of Sakhalin, and may well come into similar proximity in Korea in the course of time. You are familiar with the estimates of the armed forces which the Soviet Union maintains in the Far East and you know what a simple task it would be in these circumstances for it to seize a demilitarized Japan, after the departure of the occupational troops.

It is not very likely that the majority of the Allies could be brought at this time to give their consent to a treaty of peace which would permit the Japanese to arm to a point at which they could have any chance of defending themselves in a straight military

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encounter with the Russians. And if the veto were to be retained by the Soviet Union and China, then Japanese re-armament would be practically out of the question. Furthermore, there is a serious question whether the Japanese themselves would wish, or could afford, to go in for re-armament on this scale. The lesson they have received was a bitter one; and we have all been preaching to them for years about the evils of militarism. Japan's re-armament brings up bitter questions about the position in Japanese life of those elements which were prominently connected with Japanese militarism in the past. And finally, as we shall see shortly, there is a great question as to whether Japan, if she is to exist at all, economically, in her new frontiers and her new position, could ever afford to divert from her peacetime production the resources which would be required for such armament.

It is these considerations which cause some of our foremost authorities still to look to some sort of a special treaty of demilitarization, to be negotiated among the major Allies at the time of the conclusion of a treaty of peace, as the best means of guarding Japan's military security in the future. I must admit: it is hard to find any suitable alternative. But again, we must recognize that as things stand today such a treaty, even if it bore the Soviet signature, would never deter the Soviet Union from military action against Japan if such action appeared to the Soviet leaders to be in their national interest.

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Please note, I say in present conditions. We do not have to assume that present conditions will last forever. If the policies on which we are embarked are successful, a day will come when the men in the Kremlin will be more moderate and less ambitious in their political and military policies--not because they wish to be but because circumstances have forced them to be. When and if this day comes, I think we might consider relying on a treaty of demilitarization, plus a strong U.S. military position in Okinawa, to guard Japanese security. Until then, my own feeling is that we have no alternative but to keep the U.S. flag flying and U.S. uniforms visible, on Japanese territory.

So much for Japan's capability for fending for herself militarily in the event of a treaty of peace. How about her capability for fending for herself economically?

Take a look at a few of the changes which the war and our post-war policies have brought to Japan. First there are the territorial losses to remember what the loss of her positions on the Asiatic mainland meant to Japan. In addition to the actual territory, Japan lost approximately fifty billion dollars of investment on the mainland of Asia. A large proportion of the raw materials for Japan's industries come from Manchuria, Korea and Formosa. At present it is principally the lack of raw materials that is stagnating Japan's industrial recovery. She also lost a large part of the fisheries which she was able to exploit before the war. Invisible sources of revenue have been practically wiped out. She has lost three-fourths of her merchant tonnage.

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What remains is not adequate to carry her trade. Large portions of her industry were destroyed by bombing. Of the remainder, a thousand plants are in various states of stagnation, inactivity or misuse, because they have been earmarked for reparations. Others are affected by loss of raw materials. Many more are affected by the industrial deconcentration programs. To some extent the experienced managerial personnel has been eliminated by the purges. Japan's population, on the other hand, has continued to grow rapidly. Not only have we ourselves repatriated some seven million Japanese who normally lived, or were stationed elsewhere; but the public health work of General MacArthur's Headquarters has been so startlingly successful that the death rate is declining and the birth rate is flourishing. (Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me explain that I am not accusing SCAP of any direct complicity in the increase of the birth rate - only indirect.)

The agricultural land in Japan, on the other hand, is no greater than it was before, and could hardly be more extensively exploited. To meet just the most urgent food and raw material deficit we have, as you know, been contributing some $200,000,000 a year from U.S. sources, and this figure will be boosted to $360,000,000 in the coming fiscal year.

Plans are being worked on for a recovery program which would render Japan self-supporting within the course of a few years. But here again, as in the case of the most highly industrialized European countries such as England and Germany, it is clear that Japan will have to produce far more on her reduced territory and export far more to the rest of the world --and above all to the dollar area--if she is to have any

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hope of making her way in the future. Yet today her industrial production has not reached 40% of pre-war; and not only is her foreign trade almost stagnant, but any revival of it

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of it can proceed only against a heavy psychological handicap in the attitudes of other nations, particularly in southeast Asia.

In the face of all these obstacles it is easy to see that if a peace treaty were to be concluded now and the protecting and helping hand of the U.S. withdrawn, Japan would be totally unprepared to cope with the problem of making its way economically in its new world position. Further U.S. aid would certainly be necessary. On the other hand, we have not yet found a way to grant aid -- even to the mature and relatively reliable countries of northern Europe -- without exercising some degree of control. In Japan, where the political development is in a state of extreme uncertainty and disadjustment, control would be all the more necessary.

But here again, if control is to be maintained, so we want a treaty of peace? The great beauty of a treaty of peace is its psychological effect in making the Japanese feel that the effects of the war have been finally liquidated and that it is up to them to see to it that Japan fulfills with credit the responsibilities of complete national independence. To burden a treaty of peace with continued controls would be to rob it of much of its purpose.

This brings us to the political element. Is there any reason to believe that Japan, if turned loose today, would be politically healthy and stable?

I approach this subject with great diffidence. No one, I think, knows a great deal about the real mainsprings of Japanese political evolution -- and I myself less than a many others. But there are a few facts to which I think we might be warranted in clinging.

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The faith of the Japanese in their traditional institutions of oligarchical authoritarianism has been profoundly shaken by the outcome of the war. On the other hand, they are almost totally unaccustomed, as a nation, to the concepts of democracy (or representative government, if you will) which are embodied in their new constitution and in the various reforms which have been instituted during the occupation period. (I am thinking here of such things as the educational reform, the police reform, the deconcentration of industry, the purges, etc.) There is a question, furthermore, as to how much they regard these new institutions as really their own. It would take a wise man to distinguish in the reactions of the Japanese today the various components of their attitude in political matters: first, a child-like tendency to imitate a successful conqueror; second, a dead-pan politeness which could conceal God knows what hatred and contempt; and thirdly, a sly, oriental readiness to leave responsibility to others at this stage of the game. On top of these uncertainties, we must recognize that most of those people who had been trained by education and experience to qualities of leadership and administrative ability have today been barred from Japanese public life by the occupational policies of the Allies. Were a treaty of peace, consequently, to be concluded at this time, Japan would have to embark on the stresses and strains of the future with an untried system of government only tenously related to the national traditions and psychology, and with new and untried people, neither bred nor trained to the exercise of responsibility, and devoid of all those traditions and precedents which exercise some restraining and guiding

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In a peaceful world, on islands far removed from arrogant or embittered neighbors, with national resources commensurate with the size and needs of her population, such an experiment might be thinkable; and out of what would certainly be an initial period of floundering and milling about and probably bloodshed and bitterness, political institutions might eventually emerge which would be in keeping with the needs of the Japanese people: with their national characteristics and with the present stage of their social development.

But the Japan of today does not enjoy these idyllic conditions. We have already seen what it faces, militarily and economically. It would take the strongest and the surest of governments -- it would take a government of great steadiness and sagacity and stability -- to guide Japan through the difficulties she would face if she were turned loose today in a world which causes even some of us, with all our strength and all our resources and our geographic position, to shudder with misgivings over the extent of greed and hunger and power-thirst which it contains. Could we expect Japan to have such a government? The question answers itself.

In the face of these circumstances, I think you would agree with me that it is probably just as well that we were unable to obtain agreement of the other Allies to negotiations for a treaty of peace at this time and that we have before us a further occupational period, of unknown duration, during which we can continue to maintain stability in Japan and to bring our influence to bear on the development of Japanese life. But we must bear in mind that this situation cannot last forever, or even very long. Some day it, too, will have to terminate, and the Japanese will have to be cut loose to

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fend for themselves. And it is of vital importance to us that they should achieve, as soon as possible, the capability of doing so. For while you military strategists can debate about whether it is vital to our security to retain the Japanese islands as a potential offensive base for ourselves, there can no question but that a Japan in unfriendly hands would be dangerously detrimental to our national security. It behooves us, therefore, to see to it that if Japan is not in a position to fend for herself today she be placed in such a position as rapidly as possible. And this means that in contemplating a period of further occupation in Japan, we must re-examine our occupational policies carefully to make sure that they are designed to promote the achievement of this objective.

Where do we stand today, in this respect? First of all, the military side. There is no question but that this is the toughest of all of the occupational problems. For better or for worse, we are deeply committed, ourselves, to the principle of Japanese demilitarization. I am inclined to feel that many of us often take too seriously commitments which exist only by virtue of fine phrases which we ourselves have uttered. I think it is high time that the public got used to the idea that the U.S. Government, like any sensible individual, occasionally has to change its mind. But on the subject of Japanese demilitarization, I must admit that our commitments are really deep. They are commitments not only to our recent Allies and to the Japanese people. They are also commitments to our own people, who have strong feelings arising out of the experience of the recent war.

This is a question, therefore, in which we will have to proceed very slowly and carefully. For the moment, I think the most that we can do is to see to it that Japan is equipped with a

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with a vigorous and effective maritime police and that her internal police establishment is strengthened, if possible, to a point where it could easily be further developed as a nuclear training center for a new armed force. But the main answer to Japan's military problem lies today, and must continue to lie, in the policies of the western world with regard to the Soviet Union.

Now how about economic policy? We must be very careful in our thinking on this subject. It is easy to criticize SCAP for the present state of Japanese economy and to say that if the Headquarters would only leave things alone everything would be all right.

But things are not quite that simple. General MacArthur's Headquarters and the Military Government Teams of General Eichelberger's Tactical Forces have done, in many respects, an impressive job, in the face of formidible odds, to revive and to keep alive the Japanese economy. Without the work of the occupational force there is no question in my mind but that Japan would have been a shambles of hunger, disorder, disease and violence in this post-war period. A great deal of administrative skill and sheer American technical ingenuity has gone into the solution of problems which must have seemed almost insoluble at first glance.

But the fact remains that the main burden of occupational policy has rested in this initial post-hostilities period on reform rather than economic stability; and the Headquarters of SCAP has been obliged to concentrate on a number of objectives which have run directly counter, or largely counter, to economic stability. SCAP should not be blamed for this. The instructions have come from Washington; and this Government, as a whole, is responsible for them. To an extent, the reform

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program, too, has been dictated by the effects of the war and by the demands of Japanese society at this time. Another portion of the reform program can only be described, it seems to me, as the work of enthusiasts who were more concerned with abstractions than with flesh and blood realities, but the number of such enthusiasts in GHQ, SCAP has certainly been no greater than the number in the Department of State or in the War Department, for that matter, and probably no greater than their proportionate number in any group of representative Americans anywhere.

The fact remains that a number of occupational policies, as I say, have run counter to the interests of economic recovery. I am thinking here above all about such things as the deconcentration of industry and the reparations program. But I am also thinking of the burden of the occupation itself on Japan, of the inflationary effect which its heavy demands on the Japanese treasury could not fail to have, of its inevitable tendency to duplicate in many respects the work of the Japanese Government and to detract from the consciousness of responsibility which the Japanese should have, and finally of its well-intentioned and in some respects unavoidable but almost complete monopoly of all contacts between Japan and the outside world. As long as these factors are not ameliorated, Japan is not going to gain appreciably in economic stability. And until she does gain appreciably in economic stability, we cannot afford to cut her loose without provoking conditions which would be a direct invitation to the unrest and despair in which communism breeds.

And here we come again to the political factor. Are we doing what we can to reduce Japanese vulnerability to eventual communist penetration? Japan has a new democratic constitution

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to be sure; but it is a single chamber system, which the Russians regard as the system most favorable to communist capture. The old Ministry of the Interior, which exercised the real political control over the population, has been abolished, and with it the entire political police system. The police in urban communities throughout the country have been freed from central control in normal times. Only a relatively small and poorly armed rural police force continues to be subordinated to the central government. But this is not an effective weapon against communist penetration.

Meanwhile, we must not indulge in the pleasing illusion that our policies have not provoked deep and wide-spread resentment in Japan against us and against the new Japanese governmental system. The purges, in which certain SCAP officials have taken a more direct interest than I would have thought wise, have resulted in the elimination from Japanese public life of about 160 thousand professional officers of the armed services and many thousands of police officials, and apparently some tens of thousands of teachers, journalists, publishers, and other intellectuals. I find it hard to picture to myself a more ideal mixture for an effective underground than these groups of people, embracing as they do the three requirements for modern totalitarian action: military power, police power and propaganda -- and composed as they are of individuals forbidden to utilize any more the technical achievements or the leadership talents to which they have been educated, and condemned by blanket decree to a regime of frustration and psychological handicap which could hardly fail to make them the bitter enemies of the existing order. I may be too pessimistic. I hope I am. But all this does not look good to me; and I wonder whether

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we would not be wiser, in our occupational policies, both in Germany and Japan, to make it a principle to deny participation in public life to nobody whom we were prepared to leave alive, and conversely to leave alive no one whom we were not prepared to admit to participation in public life. Anything between the two extremes seems to me to be a sure recipe for trouble. And nothing could be more misconceived, in my judgment, than the war crimes trials. A conqueror may call his victory and his vengeance what he will; but he must not call them "justice".

It is clear, therefore, that if the Japanese are to be endowed with the capability of handling their own affairs in even the tolerably near future, there will have to be fairly extensive changes in occupational policy. What changes? Now this in itself presents a difficult problem. For not only do we have the task of concerting the formulation of such policy as between the various and sometimes conflicting views of General MacArthur's Headquarters, the service departments here in Washington, and the State Department, but as things now stand they also have to be concerted with the other Allies who are represented in the Far Eastern Commission. Even in the best of circumstances, this would not be easy. We have taken leadership in promoting many of the policies which will not have to be abandoned. And most of these Allies, I am sorry to say, still have different than we ourselves have on the requirements of the situation and naturally, perhaps, do not feel as keenly as we do either the lag in Japanese recovery -- which is not costing them hundreds of millions of dollars a [illegible] -- [illegible] the danger of communist penetration, which for [illegible]eason or other apparently seems to most of them to be less real and less alarming than it does to us.

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to us. Now to get their agreement, of course, is our job in the State Department; and it is high time that we got after it and did something about it. But it will not be easy; because there are real and serious divergencies of outlook still outstanding. It will take all our prestige and all the diplomatic skill we can muster to make others understand what to us today seems obviously and urgently necessary.

From all this, gentlemen, you will see that we have a long and tortuous path to tread before we can say that the military victory which was won so brilliantly three years ago has been developed into a real and final victory in terms of the long-term national interest of the U.S. people. For military victory alone is not necessarily anything at all, in terms of national interest. It is only a means to an end. And unless it is followed up with a political program no less determined, no less energetic and no less realistic than the military effort, the advantages which it yields can be lost in a shorter time than it took to win them.

It is here, if anywhere, that we have been dangerously weak in this post-hostilities period. I think it no exaggeration to say that of all the ieficiencies of our national policy in recent years, none has been so grievous and potentially so fateful as our failure to think through to the end the realities of our responsibilities and objectives as a victor power, and above all as an occupying power which had demanded -- and received -- unlimited scope of action through the formula of unconditional surrender. We [illegible] we have made the mistake of thinking emotionally, and in static and over-simplified

simplified terms. We have reckoned with human beings not as they are but as we felt that they should be. We have been impatient and schematic in our approach to them. We have tried to cash in on our victory all at once and for all time by achieving an immediate transformation of the conquered people in our own image. We would have been wiser, I think, if instead of taking moral attitudes we had studied our ex-enemies dispassionately and seriously, to find out what things had made them act the way they did. And it would have been better if we had thought of world events as an endless moving stream -- which indeed they are -- and had contented ourselves with a more modest but realistic effort to direct this irresistable stream gradually but surely into channels at least compatible with our long-term national security, if not with our national tastes and predelictions.

Perhaps that is too much to ask of a people moved to anger by the effects of a way which they have not provoked. But history should have taught us that the enduring peace settlements are the tolerant and moderate ones. It is not yet too late for us to assimilate and invoke this lesson. But time is very short. And a further delay can have disastrous consequences.